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A POSSIBLE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE AGAINST ENGLAND.

BY DEMETRIUS C. BOULGER.

No Englishman can have resided on the continent of Europe during the last two years, as I have done, with some special opportunities of watching the trend of political events, without becoming aware of a remarkable anti-English movement, which I may call a consolidation of Continental opinion against Anglo-Saxon expansion. It began before the United States went to war with Spain, but rather in a debating-society mood than with the serious purpose of responsible statesmen. The American public do not need to be told that the sentiment of every Foreign Office and of every nation on the mainland of Europe was against them in their contest with Spain. They also know very well that the one substantial fact which made irate potentates and irritated crowds on that continent pause before turning their sentiments into action was the presence and the power of the British fleet. The United States completed their business amid the frenzied exclamations of Continental journalists on behalf of "the innocent" and "unoffending" Spaniards. But America is far off, and when the war closed the venom and the fear of Continental Governments and nations became concentrated on Great Britain. Additional force was given to these feelings by the knowledge of the part taken by the British Government in lending its moral support to the United States, by the spectacle of the British and American peoples arriving at spontaneous agreement as to their identical interests and common mission, and by the inevitable consequence of those circumstances in the conclusion that the growth of Anglo-Saxon power, instead of being arrested, was on the point of taking a fresh and remarkable expansion.

How long these feelings might have remained in the chrysalis

stage of suppressed resentment and secret intention, if there had been no war in the Transvaal, is uncertain; but, at the present moment, the floodgates of Continental eloquence and wrath are let loose for the denunciation of England. All that was said to the discredit of the American people during the Spanish war has been written of England's action in South Africa with intensified vindictiveness and an enlarged vocabulary. It is not a question merely of the rights or wrongs of the Uitlander population being ignored and thrust aside without a moment's consideration, nor is it one as to whether some compromise might not have been discovered in the Transvaal, short of the stern arbitrament of war. A friend might hold an opinion contrary to ours without offending us or giving us the right to complain. We could make allowance for some defect in his knowledge of the facts, we should admit that his point of view was not ours. But there is all the difference in the world between the protest of a friend and the snarling of a foe. Our Continental critics leave us in no doubt as to their sentiments. They use the loftiest language, they invoke the ideal principles, they speak in the name of sublime justice, whenever they have to comment on British action; but they forget to exact from the opposing side an equal compliance with these non-terrestrial conditions, and they fail to observe them themselves when they are called on to deal with colonial problems and difficulties. The Boers may play the tyrant on the veldt without a word of censure. In their truculent intolerance they might insult the British army and drag its flag in the dirt, and the boulevard loungers would only be amused. But France may repress, as the savage disposition of some of her officers may dictate, tribes fighting for their independence in the Soudan or in Madagascar; Russia may make an example of the inhabitants of Tashkent, when they show an inclination to dispute her authority; Germany can ride rough-shod, in her characteristic official manner, over her subjects in the Cameroons; all these things may be done with impunity, while England is howled at for vindicating her authority and for punishing those who have reviled at and defied her. Only in her case does the Continental critic adopt his severest mood, take down his book of homilies, and after the most edifying admonition condemn her to the public pillory among the nations, and—what is more congenial to their mood and nearer to their practical purpose—to the dis-

comfiture and overthrow an all-powerful Deity will mete out for such iniquity. Our Continental critics and enemies who arrogate to themselves, under an appropriated decree of Providence imagined in their own conceit, the position of judge, jury and court of appeal in one, evolve out of their own rhetoric the arrest and downfall of Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

These expressions of violent prejudice and unreasoning wrath are merely the froth on the surface of the waters of public opinion. But, in the depths, there is a serious movement, a profound agitation, not to be ignored, threatening serious disturbance when it acquires the necessary volume, and calling for careful and timely examination. The questions that require consideration are not limited to the one raised in the title of this paper. They are not confined to the possibility or probability of a general Continental alliance against England. A far graver danger is threatened by the general hostility of all the Powers, which, moving on their own independent lines, are yet inspired by the common sentiment that England's further expansion must be stopped. That opinion is common to them all in different degrees of intensity, and when people are agreed in their views it is certain that they will do nothing to hinder their realization, although they may not openly combine for the purpose. I hope to make it clear, before the end of this paper, that the peril of England in this latter form already exists, and that England has begun, unconsciously, a struggle in which the whole of Europe is arrayed against her; that the struggle will pass through several distinct episodes or chapters; and that the result will decide the fate of the British Empire. In studying so momentous a problem, the most exalted persons are merely pieces on the chessboard. They are not entitled to any greater consideration than their inherent value and position on the table may give them, in deciding the course and the issue of the game. It would be absurd to discuss the question at all if we were obliged to consider the personal susceptibilities of an Emperor, to gloss over the rottenness of an administration, or to ignore the decadence of a nation.

Prince Bismarck said in 1885 that England had got enough of the world's surface. It was a moment of profound national depression and humiliation. Mr. Gladstone was in office. Majuba Hill was recent. The ineffaceable tragedy and disgrace of

Khartoum had just happened. The Berlin Conference was summoned. What occurred? In the centre of Africa was formed a great independent and neutral State, on the west and also on the east coast Germany acquired vast territories, while France came down to the Congo and its tributaries. In this manner barriers were placed in the path of further British expansion in Africa. To appreciate the full significance of that rebuff it must, however, be remembered that England had to cancel her own Convention with Portugal on the subject of the Congo, and to assent to her vassal, the Sultan of Zanzibar, being stripped of his possessions on the mainland, for the benefit of Germany.

The ten years that followed the Berlin Conference were, for England, a period of meditation on the errors of the years from 1881 to 1885, and for attaining collectedness as to how they might be repaired. With regard to the Soudan, the country gradually adopted General Gordon's weighty conclusion, that it "could not be divorced from Egypt." Hence followed the gradual reconquest of the country by Lord Kitchener, who destroyed the military power of the Khalifa at the Atbara and Omdurman. The retrieval of that part of the Gladstone legacy of national loss and discredit was almost accompanied by a war with France over the incident at Fashoda, where a French officer, with the permission of M. Hanotaux, notwithstanding the repeated warnings of our Foreign Office, erected the tricolor. The incident ended with the establishment of British predominance throughout the Nile Valley, but the French people have decided to cherish the name of Fashoda as constituting for them a humiliation, and to use it as a war cry when they close the doors of their Exhibition.

The delay of ten years in commencing the reconquest of the Soudan did not make the task appreciably more difficult, for the dervishes were isolated, and the clever scheme formed by Russia and France to make our task more troublesome by inciting and assisting Abyssinia to join the Khalifa, or at least to attack us, was not allowed sufficient time to mature or come off. But the nineteen years that have elapsed since Majuba have served to enlarge a local question of comparatively little importance into a problem of the first magnitude, affecting the general international position, and influencing more or less the attitude of the Continental Powers toward England. There is no more uncertainty as to the persons who have created for us this aggrava-

tion of difficulty in South Africa than there was about the intrigues in Abyssinia and on the Upper Nile. Germany, and, above all Germans, the German Emperor, is just as responsible for President Krüger's defiance as France and M. Hanotaux were for Marchand's appearance at Fashoda, and for the hostile intentions of M. de Bonchamps and Henry of Orleans at the court of King Menelek. But they are responsible for a great deal more. Their encouragement, advice and practical assistance, in the form of officers, drill sergeants, artillerymen and arms, have made the Boers a formidable military opponent, only to be crushed by the loss of many brave lives and by an extraordinary effort. In South Africa, as in the Soudan, British supremacy will be reasserted; but it is impossible to ignore the quarter whence the Boers received inspiration, not merely as to their line of policy, but as to their strategy in the field, which might well have gained for the Boers some military successes at the beginning of the war.

Without an alliance, therefore, it is clear that for a number of years France, Germany and Russia have been pursuing an anti-English policy, opposing our plans, raising difficulties in our path, and diminishing by extensive colorings of the map the area left vacant for the introduction of our commerce and civilization. There is no reason to suppose that these measures have been carried out on any systematic plan, but they certainly indicate the prevalence of a general anti-English sentiment, such as Prince Bismarck crystallized in the phrases, "England had got enough of the world's surface," and "It might not be Germany's interest to take any specific colony, but it certainly was her interest to prevent England getting it." These sentences were not appreciated at the time, but a little reflection will show how the ideas they expressed have influenced foreign policy during the last fourteen or fifteen years. But in no part of the world—for the time is not yet ripe for treating China after the fashion of Africa in 1885—has the effort been greater to create for England a situation of danger and embarrassment than in South Africa. When the first campaigns with the Boers were undertaken no outsiders were interested in the question. Not a gold mine had been worked, hardly one Uitlander could be discovered on the veldt. But the stubbornness and success of the Boer resistance in 1881 aroused some interest in them, and that interest has

certainly not diminished by the extraordinary gold discoveries and the consequent inrush of European adventurers and settlers, chiefly British, but with a very considerable number of Germans, Dutch and Cape Dutch, all of whom gradually adopted, as comprehensive names, those of Hollanders in the Transvaal and Afrikanders in the Cape Colony. In this way was created a party, not confined to the Transvaal, but extending its organization and influence throughout South Africa, distinct from and opposed to the British settlers and Government. The strength and cohesion of that party were insured by the use of their common language, and thus, for the first time, German and its offshoots entered the lists as a rival to English, on the ground of colonial dominion.

But if the project was not restricted to the Transvaal, it was thence that it derived its chief solidity and resources. The gold of its mines, applied to the purchase of warlike stores and to the employment of German and other officers and ex-soldiers, gave it a military power far in excess of the number or general knowledge of the inhabitants. The love of independence shown throughout Boer history, and the prestige acquired by the successes in 1881, made the Transvaal the natural leader in a Teutonic movement throughout South Africa. But not merely is the Transvaal to be regarded, in the development of the question, as a free agent acting for and on its own behalf. If it had not possessed another rôle—if, in plainer words, it had stood alone—the decisive interference in its affairs might have been put off till the disappearance of Mr. Krüger in the ordinary course of nature should have given a chance for more enlightened and saner counsels. But the Transvaal was the *imperium in imperio* which supplied our enemies with the means of organizing, within our limits, a formidable confederacy that, at the given moment of external complications, might have revealed all its power and ambition, to the serious peril and perhaps temporary disappearance of British supremacy south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Before the Jameson raid, it was well known how active German agents had grown in the Transvaal, and in the four years since that episode their activity has increased and grown more systematic and dangerous. Under these circumstances, it would have been madness to defer action any longer. The German Emperor's telegram of congratulation and support to President Krüger in 1896 was the indiscreet lifting of the

veil as to all Germany had done and intended still to do in the Transvaal.

Four years have passed since that telegram, and we are now assured that the German Emperor has purged him of his offense, and that the British plans will encounter no opposition at his hands. Before these lines can appear in print, he should have visited England, and many opinions will be hazarded as to the true significance of that perhaps farewell interview between grandmother and grandson. But even if the visit comes off, it will perhaps not enable us to see very much more clearly, or a great deal further ahead, as to the true intentions of Germany. The affectionate and confidential utterances of royal personages will not arrest the course of State policy, nor turn aside from their purpose statesmen and diplomatists whose efforts and reputation are staked on the arrest of Anglo-Saxon expansion. Any new agreement with Germany will be like that already signed, but unpublished, of which the one thing certainly known is that it *did not* give us Delagoa Bay, when its possession would have enabled us to take the Boers in flank and at a great disadvantage; or, perhaps, it will more resemble the unsigned agreement with Mr. Rhodes at Berlin, which will create German railways, without carrying us much on the road for the Cape to Cairo railway. The German Emperor has left both England and America in no sort of doubt as to his views, wishes and plans in regard to their affairs. He is their enemy, but their waiting enemy, because his fleet is in its infancy, "a mere baby," to use his own words; but it seems to have escaped the notice of his critics that babies, especially such a fine healthy baby as the German navy of to-day, become men.

These preliminary observations, necessary for the correct appreciation of what follows, may have made clear one thing, viz.: the hostile intentions, toward England in the first place and the United States in the second, of the three leading military Powers, France, Germany and Russia. With regard to Russia, it need only at this stage be observed that she has open to her in Asia a wide field for ambitious operations, that occupy her attention and render her less keen than the others to interfere with Great Britain in quarters with which she has little or no concern. It may be said of her at once that, if she were induced to interfere with England over any African question, it would be not of her

own free will, but under the pressure of France. The crippling of England in any quarter might bring the Cossacks nearer to the Indus or Peking, but the secret of Russia's success hitherto has been the concentration of her policy, and she may prefer to attain her objects in her own way and without seeking remote adventures. With the exception of the Abyssinian scheme, Russia has as yet shown no inclination to come into collision with England outside of Asia. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that, whatever St. Petersburg may do in support of others, the initiative of any offensive measure against England in Africa will be at Paris or Berlin. In both those capitals there has for many years been a systematic plan of embarrassing and thwarting England in Africa. The French designs were brought to a summary check at Fashoda, but the German have continued down to the present hour under a friendly guise.

But there is a radical difference between hostile intentions and a definite alliance. All the Continental nations may dislike and envy us; but they have their own relations and differences to consider. Europe is an armed camp from the Channel to the Caspian; but the explanation of that fact is not the wish to make war on England, but the need of defending their several frontiers against one another. The practical questions are: Can the Powers lay aside, even momentarily, their mutual jealousies and apprehensions, to combine against England? Do statesmen at Berlin seriously contemplate a union with Paris and St. Petersburg, in order to call a halt on the British in South Africa? Can they afford to face the consequences of the success of a policy in which they would be following the lead of France and Russia? Can they feel confident that the policy would succeed, either by England's yielding to a formidable international demonstration, or by the Powers vanquishing England on the sea? We may be sure, at least, that the German Government will carefully consider these points in all their bearings before they come to the momentous decision to quarrel with England. They will be swayed very much by their estimate of the relative strength of the Continental Powers and the British Empire. They will carefully examine, by the light of the information they possess, the condition of the allies who are only waiting their signal to present England with an ultimatum which, if signed by Germany, would make her for good and forever an enemy. If that step

would isolate England to-day, Germany at no remote date might find herself in the same position, and exposed on both her frontiers to the double peril of Slav ambition and French revenge.

The material and political condition of European countries may also appear discouraging under the close and critical examination of German spectacles. Germany is allied with two tottering States in Austria and Italy, in both of which exist serious elements of internal dissension and weakness, that might greatly diminish their value at the critical moment when Germany had need of them. With regard to any possible action against England, Austria would not count at all, and Italy is the one European Power that would certainly not take part against her, because the co-operation of the British Navy is needed, and assured by a definite understanding, for the protection of her own coasts. Spain does not seriously exist, and the sentiment of little States like Holland and Belgium, however noisily uttered, can have no influence on the question. The continent of Europe, therefore, resolves itself, for practical purposes, into the three Powers, Germany, France and Russia; and when the possibility of an alliance between those three rival Powers is suggested, one realizes the exact difficulties that lie in the path of those who would effect it.

Russia and France being already allies for better or worse, the practical point to be discovered is whether there is any reasonable probability of Germany's associating herself with them for the arrest of England's progress, and, if need were, for her more serious discomfiture. There was a time when the mere proposition would have been received with ridicule, and when an equal repugnance to the suggestion would have been shown at both Berlin and Paris. But as much cannot be said to-day. The alliance may be impracticable, but at least it excites no repugnance. The idea of such a combination has sunk into the minds of both peoples, and it will at least afford abundant material for discussion. Nor can it be forgotten that such an alliance existed, for all practical purposes, at the Berlin Conference of 1885, and still more openly in 1895, when the three Powers arrested Japan's progress and ignored England. The old theory that France and Germany could and would never combine requires at least more careful examination before passing current than formerly. It

may still be sound, but it has not such a sure foundation as it once had. France is undoubtedly willing to sink her ancient feud with Germany, in order to gratify her more pressing irritation against England. The German Emperor has but to give a nod and he can fold the French Republic, Cap of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and all, with the French army to boot, in his arms. If Germany had only to think of theatrical effect, the inclination to make the sign would be irresistible, but she must look a little further ahead and think what will come after.

It is not going too far to say that France has offered Germany her alliance against England, with the object of stopping her conquest of the two South African Republics. Of course, France has not put herself in the position of inviting a formal rebuff, but at Berlin they are in no doubt as to what France is willing to do, and also as to what France wishes Germany to do. The visit of the German Emperor to Windsor is regarded as the cold-water douche to these indirect overtures, but it may not have all the significance or importance imagined. Still, it means that Germany is not as eager as she was supposed to be to enter the lists against England. She has reckoned up the odds, and she has come to the conclusion that the fleets of the three Powers would not be certain to have the better of the English fleet, which could count on the co-operation of Japan at once, and probably of Italy as well, with the possible intervention of the United States on the same side following, perhaps, at a short interval. The paper odds of the German-French-Russian fleets against England would thus be turned into the material and incontestable superiority of England and her allies, when the nations vanquished would certainly lose their navies and their colonies. From inviting that catastrophe the Emperor William has drawn back, and just in time. Four years ago he went very near to the edge of the precipice; but, after some irritation and resentment, he seems to have placed upon himself a prudent restraint which the excited exhortations of the German Colonial Party are not likely to break down.

His policy is not dictated by any sincerely friendly feeling toward England, but by a careful regard for German interests. Perhaps the occasion will arise, before the Transvaal difficulty is settled, for him to show how very little he cares about England and her interests, although he is not disposed to enter the field

openly against her. If, for instance, as is by no means improbable, France and Russia take steps which assail our rights in some quarter, and provoke a war for which England was never more ready than at the present hour, Germany would stand aside and observe the strictest neutrality. She would not move a finger to help us, and would take a cynical satisfaction in seeing her formidable military neighbors injure themselves; and, at the same time, the damage that could not fail also to be inflicted by such a war on England would facilitate the Emperor's schemes for the commercial and colonial expansion of his own country. Moreover, the German Emperor and Government will expect to be paid for this neutrality, whether there is war or peace, by concessions in Africa or the Pacific; and, as the Germans are good hands at driving a bargain—the title of "honest broker" was not gained by Bismarck without reason—the highest value will be set on their services in order to gain the largest amount of reward. Provided there is no general outbreak of war and Great Britain is left undisturbed to establish firmly and indisputably her supremacy in the Transvaal and Orange Free States, no Englishman could object to see Germany come down to the Zambesi, when Portugal quits the East Coast, with Walfisch Bay on the West Coast thrown in. But if war ensues with France and Russia, then Germany should receive nothing unless she openly ranges herself on the side of England. It is very doubtful if the arrangements between England and Germany have provided for that contingency.

Germany has very practical reasons for not combining with France and Russia in any serious enterprise. If she contributed to their success, she would be strengthening her enemies, and a day of reckoning would be sure to arrive. If they failed, she would share in their discomfiture; and, on measuring the comparative sea forces of the world, the balance is against success.

But Germany has other reasons for pausing before she commits herself to a line of action that would make her subordinate to Russia and France. What is her estimate of the real strength and resources of those two Empires? Do the confidential reports from Paris and St. Petersburg represent them as being in a sound and healthy condition, and able to bear the strain, not of a single campaign, but of a long war, waged in every quarter of the world? No one questions the military spirit of the French

soldier, but the French soldier would have very little to say in a war with England. Nor need the merit of the best part of the Russian Army be disputed; but India and Chiná are still a long way off, and where else is the British Empire vulnerable from Russia? Such military strength as France and Russia undoubtedly possess is not of the kind to make them dangerous opponents to England at the present moment. On the other hand, the German authorities cherish no illusion on the capacity of the British fleet to deal with that of France and Russia combined. The immediate consequences of a war would be, therefore, the sweeping of the Mediterranean Sea, the Channel, and the China Seas by the British Navy. There would be some sanguinary engagements, some losses by the victors, but the result would be to put "Paid" to the account of French and Russian schemes beyond their land frontiers. What would be the consequences of those facts in the two Empires? How would France, overtaxed, miserable as she is at heart under the overshadowing military superiority of Germany, stand the humiliation of that discomfiture? How would Russia, immature, unready and probably rotten at the core, retain her position if to the loss of her fleet were added the collapse of the position she has laboriously gained in Eastern Asia, and which is based on an insecure foundation? There is no reason to believe that an accurate dissection of either of those States, if it were possible, would reveal a thoroughly sound constitution; and the first collision of the opposing fleets would reveal the truth as under the touch of Ithuriel's spear. Germany cannot pretend to be omniscient, but she showed that she possessed good information in 1870, and there is no reason to suppose that she is less accurately informed to-day. The policy of her ruler has so far been modified that he has drawn back from the policy which would have made him the ally of France and Russia against England; and all the barking of the anti-English press incited by Dr. Leyds and his influential German friends will not make him swerve from his course. But that policy is dictated by no regard for England; it is the result of a calm consideration of all the elements in the question. For this occasion, at least, we can feel sure that Berlin will not dance to the music set by Paris and St. Petersburg.

The possible Continental alliance against England resolves itself, by a process of elimination, into the opposition of France

and Russia—an opposition which, however serious, the British Empire can face with a reasonable amount of equanimity and confidence in the result. It is regrettable to see that, after over eighty years of peace and on some occasions of alliance, the rivalry and hatred of France for England exist just as keenly as at any time during the previous eight centuries of war. The French hate the Germans, but are afraid of them. They know that, unless they can produce a military genius of the highest order, the odds are overwhelmingly against them in any renewed struggle with Germany, and their “great” generals of late bear the names Boisdeffre, Mercier and Roget! They think it safer, therefore, to take out of the cupboard their old animosity toward England, and to provide their army with an opportunity of redeeming its good name at the expense of “*perfide Albion*.” That is a dangerous sentiment to cherish against a State which has legitimate grievances against France’s attitude from Newfoundland to the Chinese Province of Yunnan. A spark may at any moment produce an explosion in such a magazine of internal irritation and discontent as is the France of to-day. The further forbearance of England is not to be relied on if a Waima incident occurred on the Burmese frontier, or if Pierre Loti repeated in any form at Cabul Marchand’s theatrical exhibition at Fashoda. Anglo-French relations have entered on a phase which must inevitably have a hostile termination, unless France has the wisdom to tack and steer an opposite course.

Neither the Russian Government nor the Russian people are swayed by any bitterly hostile feelings toward England such as animate all the nations of French race. They see in the British Empire a rival with which, at some future date, they will probably come into collision; but they have no wish to hasten the date. The rivalry of England and Russia is like the approach of a comet toward our planet. The political astronomers have not been able to fix the date of the impact, nor can they be absolutely sure that nature will not, at the eleventh hour, provide some means of averting the collision. But Russia is tied to France for better or for worse, and the conditions of her ally may cause her some reasonable apprehension. In a choice of evils, Russia may prefer to accompany France along a course that she does not approve of to leaving her in a state of internal discontent and disorder, which may sap her value to Russia as an ally. Even

during the Fashoda business, France received assurances that Russia would not fail her, although that Power hoped there would be no war. Nor was Russia's action confined to words. She sent 10,000 more troops to Central Asia, and strengthened her garrisons on the Afghan frontier. If she did this in regard to the Upper Nile difficulty, it is certain that she would do a great deal more in so important and interesting an occurrence as an attempt to save the Transvaal from becoming British. But there is no fear that France and Russia will attempt anything so Quixotic as helping the Boers to emerge from their condition as the vassals of England. All the denunciation in the press of England's tyranny and ambition will not, on the eve of a new century, induce those Powers to openly oppose what they know England has a perfect right to do. The practice of throwing projectiles, in the form of abuse and epithets, at the head of the English has always been a favorite pastime with Continental journalists. It amuses them and does not hurt us, as the song says; but the Governments know very well that the Boers have brought their punishment and changed fate on their own heads.

The action of France and Russia will be of a different form to that. It will not be less hostile to England, but it will be more practical. They cannot dream of aiding the Boers directly; nor, without the co-operation of Germany, which, I have shown by weighty reasons, they will not get, can they think of presenting an ultimatum to England of "Hands off the Transvaal!" But they may think that England is so occupied in South Africa that she will not oppose their proceedings somewhere else, and that she will look on while they appropriate certain points which they think will prove advantageous to them in the future. They may hold this opinion so strongly that, like the Emperor Nicholas I., they will believe that England, under the very considerable provocation they propose offering her, will still not fight at such a time as she is employed in South Africa, and, like that ruler, they may find that they are mistaken and have gone too far. At this moment it is not very certain what steps these two Powers are going to take; but one of the steps is undoubtedly a joint naval demonstration in the Persian Gulf, and another is probably a similar movement in the vicinity of Ceuta. In regard to both movements, Russia would take the lead, and it is believed in well informed circles that Count Mouravief arranged for the occupa-

tion of Ceuta during his visit to Spain. Russia wishes to obtain a port on the southern coast of Persia, in order to secure a terminus for her projected line across that country and to anticipate the arrival of the Germans down the Euphrates. In regard to France, the direct practical advantage of these two moves is far from being clear, even if they were accompanied by a sentimental gain in the marriage of a Spanish princess, and possible future Queen, with so patriotic and chauvinistic a Frenchman as Prince Henry of Orleans.

Such are the schemes of our enemies, and the only practical question is whether the British Government will allow them to be carried into effect. The position of Ceuta is so admirable that the proposition has sometimes been put forward in Spain to offer it in exchange for Gibraltar. If there never was any strong reason for believing that the proposal would be accepted, there was at least nothing in the offer to make it appear ridiculous. If Ceuta was a strong place twenty years ago, the increased range of fortress artillery has made it more formidable than ever, and Gibraltar itself would be within the reach of its guns if it fell into the hands of a first-class Power. Before these lines can appear in print, the policy of the two Powers may have been unmasked, and England may have shown how she will regard it and what measures she proposes to take to safeguard herself. But it may be confidently predicted that any attempt to seize Ceuta will be treated as a *casus belli*. With regard to the proposed demonstration in the Persian Gulf, it is not possible to speak so clearly and positively. It depends very much on the size of the demonstration and the incidents accompanying it. It would not be a friendly step, of course, but its gravity might not warrant a declaration of war. We can all see that Russia is bound to have a hand in deciding the future of Persia, just as she is of China. These sick Asiatic countries will have to be healed by some one or other, and it is problematical if Russia will be stronger with a port on the Persian Gulf or without one. If Russia and France confine themselves to some movement in this quarter, war may be averted, because England can adopt counter precautions of her own at the Indian entrance to the Persian Gulf. The only obscurity is what benefit France expects to derive from measures so exclusively Russian. Perhaps she will receive assurances of future support in regard to her plans in southwestern China,

plans that are certain to bring England and France as rudely into conflict as they were brought on the Nile.

Taking a broad view of the international situation, and in the endeavor to pierce the clouds hanging over the European world, the final word may still be given in favor of the balance turning for peace, and for the adjournment of any serious effort to cripple England. This is probably the last occasion on which the hostile Powers will place a restraint on themselves before, taking wishes for certainties, they cross swords with the British Empire. The French people will conceal or restrain a little longer their desire to fight England. They may talk and threaten, but they will not imperil the success of their Exhibition. Russia is quite willing to wait, and also prefers her own slow methods to the impetuosity of her vivacious partner. The risk is that they may both go a little further than the British Government can stand, and before they well know what they have done they may find themselves engaged in a naval war that they little expected. The French military authorities cherish many fine schemes of establishing their reputation by a brilliant stroke at the expense of England. They have had, for some years, a plan for throwing a force across the Channel and seizing Dover. Its merit may be inferred from the fact that General Boulanger drew it up; and now they have added a project for seizing Malta or Gibraltar, one or both, by a *coup de main*, in which absolute treachery would play no small part. It is not strange that French generals should conceive these schemes, but it certainly is strange that they should think the schemes can be kept secret.

The real danger of the hour to England comes, then, from France, behind whom stands Russia, and if there is to be war, "the rescue of the Boers" will be as good a cry as any other. It will be received with general acclamation by the European public in States which have no pretense to have a voice in the matter, and even in Germany, where the decision to remain neutral will not prevent the mass of the people from hoping that England will meet with discomfiture and damage. At the latest, the close of the year will tell us what we must expect; but, in the worst event, the British Empire of to-day will give a good account of Russia and France combined and make them bitterly regret their decision to assail it.

DEMETRIUS C. BOULGER.